

REMARKS

This Application has been carefully reviewed in light of the Office Action mailed July 23, 2010. Claims 1, 5-9, 12-14, and 17-21 are amended above. Claims 1 and 5-21 are currently pending in this application; however, claims 10-11 and 15-16 have been withdrawn from further consideration. Applicant respectfully submits that no new matter has been added by way of the amendments presented herein. Applicant respectfully requests reconsideration of this application, and favorable action on all remaining claims, in view of these amendments and remarks.

I. Petition for Extension of Time

Concurrent with this application, Applicant submits a one-month Petition for Extension of Time and the required fee as set forth in 37 C.F.R. § 1.17(a). Applicant respectfully requests a one-month extension of the period for reply.

II. Request for Continued Examination

Concurrent with this application, Applicant submits a Request for Continued Examination and the required fee as set forth in 37 C.F.R. § 1.17(e). Applicant respectfully requests continued examination of this application.

III. Allowable Subject Matter

In the Office Action, the Examiner indicated that claims 5-8 would be allowable if written in independent form and amended to overcome any rejections under 35 U.S.C. § 112. Applicant thanks the Examiner for this indication of allowable subject matter.

IV. Claim Objections

In the Office Action, the Examiner has objected to claims 1 and 8 due to minor informalities. Claims 1 and 8 are amended above to correct the informalities noted by the Examiner. Thus, Applicant respectfully requests that the objection be withdrawn.

V. Claim Rejections Under 35 U.S.C. § 112

Claims 1, 5-9, 12-14, and 17-21 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 112, second paragraph, as being indefinite. First, the Examiner asserted that claim 1 lacks a recitation of structural limitations. Claim 1 has been substantially amended above to incorporate specific structural features including the connection of the at least one compression member and the at least two tension members with the rigid plate-shaped element.

Second, the Examiner notes that there is insufficient antecedent basis for the term "the joint elements" appearing in claim 1. Claim 1 is amended above to remove this term. Thus, Applicant respectfully requests that the § 112 rejection be withdrawn.

Third, the Examiner notes claim 9 does not include sufficient structural limitations for the term "connecting element" or the term "means for fastening". Claim 9 is amended above to address the deficiencies noted by the Examiner. Thus, Applicant respectfully requests that the § 112 rejection applied to claim 9 be withdrawn.

Claims 1, 5, 7-9, and 20 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 112, second paragraph as being incomplete. First, regarding claim 1, the Examiner notes that there is insufficient recitation of the structural engagement between the "first and second fastening means", "the opening", "the plate-shaped section of the node element", "the node element", "the joint element", "the hollow body", "the end cap", the compression member", and "the at least two tension members". Claim 1 has been substantially amended above to address the deficiencies noted by the Examiner. Specifically, the terms "node element", "joint element", "end cap", "first fastening means", and "second fastening means" have been omitted from amended claim 1. In addition, recitation of structural features clarifying the interaction of "the hollow body", "the compression member", "the at least two tension members", "the opening", and "the rigid plate-shaped element" have been added to claim 1.

Regarding claim 5, the Examiner notes that there is insufficient recitation of the structural engagement between "the first fastening means", "the second fastening means", the

"compression member" and "the at least two tension members". Claim 5 is substantially amended above to clarify the structural interaction between these features. Applicant respectfully requests that the § 112 rejection of claim 5 be withdrawn.

Regarding claim 7, the Examiner notes that the term "auxiliary sealing means are provided does not provide any structural limitation. Claim 7 is amended above to re-phrase this feature. Applicant respectfully requests that the § 112 rejection of claim 7 be withdrawn.

Regarding claim 8, the Examiner notes that there is not any structural limitations recited. Claim 8 has been amended to address this deficiency. Applicant respectfully requests that the § 112 rejection applied to claim 8 be withdrawn.

Regarding claim 9, the Examiner notes that there is not any structural limitations recited. Claim 9 has been amended to address this deficiency. Applicant respectfully requests that the § 112 rejection applied to claim 9 be withdrawn.

Regarding claim 20, the Examiner notes that there is not any structural limitations recited. Claim 9 has been amended to address this deficiency. Applicant respectfully requests that the § 112 rejection applied to claim 9 be withdrawn.

VI. Claim Rejections Under 35 U.S.C. § 103

Claims 1, 9, 12-14, and 17-21 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over French Patent Publication No. 2,341,017 to Potocki et al. ("Potocki") in view of PCT Publication No. WO 01/73245 to Pedretti ("Pedretti"). Applicant respectfully traverses these claim rejections.

Claim 1 is amended above to recite, *inter alia*, a rigid plate-shaped element disposed at least at one end of a gas-tight inflatable hollow body and connected to both at least one compression member and at least two flexible tension members, such that the at least one compression member is disposed between the at least two flexible tension members. Applicant

respectfully submits that Potocki and Pedretti, taken alone or in combination, fail to disclose this claim feature.

Potocki, as best understood by Applicant, relates to devices for joining structural elements. In contrast to amended claim 1, the primary means of joining the structural elements disclosed in Potocki appears to be a threaded interface (34) which is received into respective ends of two or more structural elements (6).¹ In Figure 4, Potocki depicts a sleeve element (35) that receives respective ends of two or more structural elements (6). However, Potocki does not depict at least two tension members or at least one compression member as recited in amended claim 1. Thus, Potocki fails to disclose at least one compression member or at least two tension members connected to a rigid plate shaped element such that the at least one compression member is disposed between the at least two tension members as recited in amended claim 1.

Pedretti relates to a pneumatic structural element. Pedretti discloses that a tension element (4) is connected to a compression element (2) which is disposed along a length of the hollow body (1).² In contrast to amended claim 1, Pedretti contains no disclosure of a rigid plate-shaped element disposed at least at one end of a gas-tight inflatable hollow body. Thus, Applicant respectfully submits that Pedretti fails to disclose a rigid plate-shaped element disposed at least at one end of a gas-tight inflatable hollow body and connected to a compression member and connected to both at least one compression member and at least two flexible tension members, such that the at least one compression member is disposed between the at least two flexible tension members as recited in amended claim 1. For at least this reason, Applicant respectfully submits that amended claim 1 distinguishes over the combination of Potocki and Pedretti.

Claims 9, 12-14, and 17-21 depend from, and further restrict, independent claim 1 in a patentable sense. Therefore, Applicant respectfully submits that, for at least those reasons set forth above with respect to independent claim 1, dependent claims 9, 12-14, and 17-21 also distinguish over the combination of Potocki and Pedretti.

VII. Conclusion

In view of the above amendment, Applicant respectfully submits that the present application is in condition for allowance. A Notice to that effect is respectfully requested.

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Respectfully submitted,

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¹ See Potocki, Figs, 1-5.

² Pedretti, Figs. 1a-3.